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Message Text

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51
ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-20 EB-11 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10

NSAE-00 PA-04 RSC-01 USIA-15 PRS-01 SP-03 IGA-02

ACDA-19 IO-14 SCI-06 INT-08 SAJ-01 SWF-02 DRC-01 /144 W
---------- 117443
R 060815Z APR 74
FM AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8253
INFO USDOC WASHDC
AMCONSUL MUNICH
USDA WASHDC

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ECON, EAGR, RO
SUBJECT: LACK OF RAINFALL THREATENS ROMANIAN CROPS

1. SUMMARY. SEVERELY REDUCED SOIL MOISTURE CONTENT, CAUSED BY SPARSE AUTUMN AND SPRING RAINS AND INSUFFICIENT WINTER SNOW COVER, POSES SERIOUS THREAT TO ROMANIAN AGRICULTURE, PARTICULARLY IN NORTHEASTERN, EASTERN AND CENTRAL REGIONS. MOST AFFECTED ARE FORAGE, FEED CROPS AND VEGETABLES. MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE CONFIRMED TO AMBASSADOR THAT SITUATION IN NORTHEAST AND CENTER IS SERIOUS, ALTHOUGH HE SAID MOISTURE IS STILL SUFFICIENT FOR WHEAT. EMBASSY OBSERVATIONS IN MOLDAVIA INDICATE, HOWEVER, THAT WHEAT CROPS IN SOME AREAS ARE STUNTED FROM LACK OF WATER, LOCAL AUTHORITIES ARE HIGHLY CONCERNED, AND ALL-OUT EFFORT IS BEING MADE TO IMPROVISE IRRIGATION SYSTEMS TO STAVE OFF MAJOR CROP LOSSES. END SUMMARY

2. REDUCED RAINFALL LAST AUTUMN, WHICH ACCORDING TO MINISTEROF AGRICULTURE MICULESCU WAS A FOURTH OF WHAT WAS NEEDED, COMBINED WITH SPARSE WINTER SNOWFALLS AND A DRY SPRING, HAS CREATED POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS SITUATION FOR ROMANIAN AGRICULTURE, ESPECIALLY IN MOLDAVIA. SOME AREAS, ACCORDING TO LOCAL OFFICIALS IN IASI, HAVE SEEN NO PRECIPITATION FOR AS MUCH AS SEVEN MONTHS.
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MOST SEVERELY AFFECTED AT PRESENT ARE FORAGE, FEED CROPS, AND

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VEGETABLES, ALTHOUGH WINTER WHEAT ALREADY SHOWS SIGNS OF DAMAGE IN SOME AREAS AND THERE IS POSSIBILITY OF REDUCED FRUIT CROP FROM LACK OF MOISTURE. GRASS IN PASTURAGE AREAS IS LIMITED AND SOME IASI CONTACTS SAID LIVESTOCK, PARTICULARLY SHEEP, COULD CONSE-QUENTLY BE AFFECTED IN SITUATION CONTINUES.

3. IN DISCUSSING AGRICULTURAL SITUATION WITH AMBASSADOR MARCH 29 DURING LATTER'S VISIT TO IASI, VICE PRESIDENT OF IASI COUNTRY'S PEOPLE'S COUNCIL GHEORGHE BREHUESCU TOOK POSITION THAT REDUCED MOISTURE HAS NOT YET AFFECTED CROPS TO APPRICEABLE EXTENT, ALTHOUGH TWO MORE WEEKS WITHOUT RAIN COULD SERIOUSLY DAMAGE GRAIN. MAXIMUM EFFORT IS BEING MADE TO EXPAND IRRIGATION, BREHUESCU SAID; IN FACT JURY-RIGGED SYSTEMS CAN BE SEEN ON ALL SIDES AS FARMERS TAP EVERY AVAILABLE SOURCE. BREHUESCU AGREED, HOWEVER, THAT THIS WILL NOT BE ENOUGH TO KEEP CROPS FROM DAMAGE IF RAIN DOES NOT COME SOON. EMBASSY OBSERVATIONS WOULD INDICATE THAT CROPS, INCLUDING WHEAT, HAVE ALREADY BEEN DAMAGED. THIS CONCLUSION IS FURTHER BORNE OUT BY RECENT ARTICLE ON SOIL HUMIDITY WHICH STATED THAT EVEN IF RAINS DO COME IN APRIL, THEY WILL NOT BE ABLE TO COMPLETELY REVERSE THE DAMAGE OF PAST MONTHS.

4. BREHUESCU COMMENTED THAT EVEN IF CROPS ARE SEVERELY REDUCED, THERE WILL BE NO REPEAT OF THE FAMINE THAT FOLLOWED THE DROUGHT OF 1947, CLAIMING THAT TODAY'S HIGHER LEVEL OF MECHANIZATION AND IMPROVED STORAGE AND DISTRIBUTION SYSTEMS WILL ENABLE AUTHORITIES TO COPE WITH SITUATION. HEAVIER SEEDING LAST AUTUMN WILL ALSO HELP OFFSET LOSSES, HE SAID. FACT THAT HE MENTIONED THIS SEVERE FAMINE YEAR DURING CONVERSATION ON PRESENT SITUATION INDICATES LOCAL AUTHORITIES SEE MAJOR AGRICULTURAL REVERSE AS AT LEAST POSSIBLE IF RAINS DO NOT COME SOON.

5. AGRICULTURE MINISTER MICULESCU TOOK RELATIVELY OPTIMISTIC LINE WITH AMBASSADOR DURING RECENT CONVERSATION, BUT CONCEDED THAT SITUA-TION IN NORTH AND CENTRAL ROMANIA IS ALREADY SERIOUS. MINISTRY METEOROLOGISTS PREDICT ADEQUATE RAIN IN APRIL AND MAY, HE SAID, AND STATE FARMS AND COOPERATIVES ARE BUSY WITH SPRING SOWING IN THE HOPE THAT NATURE'S EQUILIBRIUM WILL SOON BE RESTORED.

6. IN MOST RECENT CONVERSATION ON THIS SUBJECT, ASSISTANT CHIEF OF STAFF CONSTANTIN POPA, WHO HAD JUST RETURNED FROM
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INSPECTION TRIP, LAMENTED PRESENT AGRICULTURAL SITUATION. LACK OF MOISTURE, HE SAID, IS SEVERE PROBLEM NOT ONLY IN MOLDAVIA BUT ALSO IN TRANSYLVANIA AND TO CONSIDERABLE EXTENT THROUGHOUT ENTIRE COUNTRY.
BARNES

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